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FLORIDA'S IMPORTANT TOBACCO INDUSTRY

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Washington -- The development of the tobacco industry in Florida over the past century and a quarter is described in a new booklet, Florida & Tobacco, just issued by The Tobacco Institute, Inc.

Explorers of what is now the Sunshine State, saw Indians using tobacco there in the early 1500's. Yet several centuries were to pass before Florida had any share in the tobacco economy. Florida now produces important quantities of flue-cured cigarette tobacco, although earlier interest was confined to cigar production.

Cigarette tobacco valued at $9.5 million on the market was grown on more than 4,500 Florida farms in 1959, and over 4,000 acres were used to produce cigar wrapper leaf. The two types together required the labor of 9,200 farm families. More than 8,000 persons are employed in tobacco manufacturing within the state. Florida's smokers plus millions of recreation visitors make the state a major retail tobacco market.

Floridians and visitors accounted for sales of more than 639 million packages of cigarettes at retail in 1959. These purchases brought the state some $32 million in tax money in that year and also contributed a generous share to the total of $1.8 billion collected through federal tobacco excises.

From the days of Ponce de Leon to the present period of vacationland, the tobacco history of Florida is a colorful one. It's told briefly but fully in Florida & Tobacco.

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